Memorandum of Support

S.992 (Hoylman-Sigal)/A.5363 (Gallagher)

Purpose: The bill prohibits the sale and distribution of anti-fogging sprays and wipes containing perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS); provides penalties for violations.

Statement of Support: PFAS chemicals have been used since the 1940s in thousands of products including nonstick cookware, electronics, food and textile production, plastic and rubber, stain repellents, polishes, and paints and coatings. By design, they do not break down easily, and studies have shown that these “forever chemicals” accumulate in our bodies over time and increase the risk of long-term health problems, including endocrine and thyroid disruption, impacts on the immune system, reproductive toxicity, and testicular and kidney cancer. Children are especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of these chemicals due to their small size, particular metabolic capabilities, and still-developing brains and major organs.

PFAS chemicals have been discovered in drinking water all around New York State, including the shockingly high levels found in Hoosick Falls and Newburgh as the result of PFAS use in manufacturing and firefighting foams. New York State has taken steps to reduce our exposure by banning the use of PFAS in firefighting foam, food packaging, and most recently in apparel. These are important steps, but more action is needed, as the use of PFAS chemicals continues to permeate many different product sectors.

S.992/A.5363 would prohibit the sale and distribution of anti-fogging sprays and wipes containing perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances in New York State. With the rise of mask-wearing during the COVID-19 pandemic, many took to using anti-fogging sprays or wipes to stop their eyeglasses from fogging from condensation. But recent studies have found that some of the top brands of anti-fogging sprays and wipes contain high levels of PFAS chemicals.¹ The exposure of PFAS chemicals, so close to individuals’ eyes can be toxic and is just one more path of exposure that we are inundated with each day. These toxic chemicals do not break down in the human body, nor do they break down in the environment, meaning they remain and accumulate for years to come. The chemicals eventually find their way into the environment when they are thrown away, ending up in a landfill or incinerator.

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter supports S.992/A.5363 as part of the larger effort to stop the exposure of humans and wildlife to these toxic “forever chemicals.” Ridding our environment of these ubiquitous toxins will improve public health and reduce the costs of healthcare and expensive filtration of drinking water. S.992/A.5363 would help limit yet another pathway of PFAS exposure for New Yorkers.

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Urges Your Support of S.992/A.5363.

¹ https://nicholas.duke.edu/news/high-levels-pfas-found-anti-fogging-sprays-and-cloths